

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES - 14 FEBRUARY 2013 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Human Services Portfolio

Topic: Concession Card entitlements when transitioning from Parenting Payment

Question reference number: HS 2

Senator: Siewert

Type of question: Hansard pages 98-100

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 5 April 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question

- a) Senator SIEWERT: I have had a lot of trouble getting my head around—despite the fact that the minister's office has been helpful - who gets to keep the card when they are transitioning and under what circumstances.

Mr Sandison: I can give you an outline. I think the best thing would be to take the detail on notice.

- b) Senator SIEWERT: Did any of the 1,980 - DEEWR told me this yesterday - that exited from any form of income support get to keep their pensioner concession card?

Mr Sandison: When they first exit there is a brief period of up to three weeks where there can be a point where people can maintain the card and have access to some of the benefits from the card, but I would have to crosscheck with what DEEWR said in relation to that.

Senator SIEWERT: They told me to come here, when I asked them about that.

Mr Sandison: I can take it on notice.

- c) Senator SIEWERT: Of those that were exited from income support, did any of them get to keep the three weeks? As we have just discussed, they got the letter on 31 December saying it was cancelled.

Mr Sandison: I will have to check. I will take it on notice to see what we can get on that group of 2,000.

- d) Senator SIEWERT: How long is the gap usually?

Mr Sandison: Depending on where the person is, the letter would go out and there would be a generation of a card. Normally you would expect it would be within a week or two. Depending on granting of payment and confirmation around some of the earnings and those sorts of things, it should have been within the first fortnight that they were getting their cards.

Senator SIEWERT: But it was not within the first fortnight.

Ms Campbell: For this group, and I think the Christmas period may have interacted as well, because I do not think the cards were being received until after about 15 January.

Mr Sandison: Hopefully they do have them, but if there are people still without a card—

Senator SIEWERT: I have not received a complaint recently that they have not got their card. There are two things here. There is the usual period, which you say is a couple of weeks. In this instance it was more, but as you said in this instance you were making a special effort to transition people.

Mr Sandison: The normal time from when a person is cancelled or from when they commence on Newstart, the normal timeframe of the system of creating or generating a card, its production and it being sent out—I can take that on notice.

Answer

- a) When a customer with a dependent child ceases to be eligible for Parenting Payment and is granted Newstart Allowance they retain entitlement to the same type of concession card. The customer will be sent a new concession card. Until the new card is received, the customer can continue to use their old card as long as they remain eligible.
If a customer becomes eligible for an income support payment that does not have a concession card linked to it, their card will be cancelled with the same date of effect that they ceased eligibility for Parenting Payment.
- b) and c) No. However, those who continued to be eligible for maximum rate Family Tax Benefit Part A automatically retain entitlement to a Health Care Card for up to 21 days. Entitlement beyond that time depends on the customer providing information to determine ongoing eligibility.
- d) When a customer cancels from one payment and is granted another and is entitled to a concession card, the Department will usually issue the relevant concession card between one and three weeks from the date of grant of their new payment. If a customer is eligible for a concession card and urgently needs verification of entitlement, an interim voucher can be issued at a Service Centre.